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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Fifty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1290th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday 12 August 1998, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. ABOUL-NASR

later: Mr. DIACONU

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GE.98-17591 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (continued):

Tenth to thirteenth periodic reports of Cuba (CERD/C/319/Add.4; HRI/CORE/1/Add.84)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Flórez Prida, Mr. Amat Forés, Mr. Rodríguez Vidal, Ms. Valle Camino and Ms. Hernández Quesada (Cuba) took places at the Committee table.

2. Ms. FLÓREZ PRIDA (Cuba), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, introducing her country's report (CERD/C/319/Add.4), stated that it combined the tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth periodic reports from Cuba.

3. Racism had been the ideological foundation of the slavery-based regime of the colonial period. After the abolition of slavery in 1886, racism was kept in being by a complex system of ideas and discriminatory practices which ensured that the exploitation and segregation of the non-white population would continue. During the last 39 years, Cuban society had been undergoing radical socio-economic changes. One of the principal objectives of the 1959 revolution had been the eradication of racism and racial discrimination. However, the elimination of institutionalized racism and of the legal mechanisms which prevented the enjoyment of equal rights by all, irrespective of skin colour, did not lead to the disappearance of racial prejudices, as the leaders in Cuba had initially anticipated. However, in present-day Cuban society racial prejudice was of little significance and only manifested itself in the most intimate aspects of life - in particular courtship and marriage - but not at social levels. The number of racially mixed families was proof that racial prejudices did not have any real hold on society.

4. Article 42 of the Constitution provided that discrimination based on race, skin colour, sex, national origin or religious beliefs and all other forms of discrimination damaging to human dignity were prohibited and punishable under the law. Article 34 extended the protection of the Constitution to foreigners residing in the country. There were other guarantees, rights and freedoms provided for under the constitutional provisions; particular mention should be made of the right to personal property, the right to inherit, the right to claim and obtain compensation, the right not to be deprived of nationality, equality of rights and duties between spouses, equality of rights of children born within and outside marriage, freedom of artistic creation and the right to vote. The Cuban Constitution and legislation provided for the exercise of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

5. Under article 127 of the Constitution, the primary task of the Department of the Attorney-General of the Republic was to control and preserve legality, while ensuring strict compliance with the Constitution, the laws and other legal instruments with the aim of guaranteeing the rule of law and, in particular, the rights and freedoms of every citizen.

6. The nationalization of the health and education systems, together with the fact that they were free of charge and open to all, had benefited population groups such as blacks and mulattos, who had in the past been marginalized and had previously had only limited access to those services.

7. Notwithstanding the enormous difficulties caused by the economic crisis, the number of teachers in Cuba was, according to indicators, comparable with the numbers in developed countries. Ninety-eight per cent of children under age five were enrolled in the "Educa a tu hijo" (Educate your child) programme, and 17 per cent of those children were attending day-care centres. Ninety-six per cent of children aged five were attending nursery schools. In 1997, 94.2 per cent of children aged between 6 and 16 were attending school. The national education system was also responding to the needs of the 152,700 pupils living in mountainous areas; 2,400 schools with 12,600 teachers and professors had been provided for them. Special education was being imparted in 425 establishments with an aggregate staff of 13,500 persons.

8. The educational system in Cuba ensured that every citizen could continue his or her studies up to university level. Civic education, which had been restored at the beginning of the 1988-1989 school year, dealt with issues related to human rights and laid stress on the democratic principles underlying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

9. The Cuban State recognized, respected and protected freedom of conscience and religion. The rights of assembly, of demonstration and of association were also protected in articles 54 and 55 of the Constitution, and could be exercised by manual and intellectual workers, peasants, women, students and other sectors of the working population without distinction or discrimination. Act No. 54, concerning associations, prohibited the establishment of racist and segregationist associations. The same Act authorized the development of associations which promoted within the country the study, dissemination and preservation of the history, the culture and the arts of groups of different nationalities. The creation of a number of associations based on those principles was evidence of Cuba's opposition to all forms of discrimination and of the promotion of equality among individuals.

10. Since Cuba ratified the Convention in 1972, it had endeavoured to live up to the precepts set forth in article 5. The principles it was implementing included the institutional development of the country and the integral personality development of the population as well as the condemnation of all forms of discrimination, and the promotion of equality, in the different aspects of socio-political and economic life.

11. Ms. SADIQ ALI (Special Rapporteur for Cuba) expressed regret that the thirteenth report had not been submitted within the time limits set by the Convention. However, she welcomed the fact that the document contained a wealth of information, particularly on racial matters. Since the examination of the previous report an Act to reform the Constitution had been adopted by the National Assembly. The Committee hoped that the delegation would describe the impact of the constitutional changes made on the implementation of the Convention.

12. With reference to article 1 of the Convention, she congratulated the Cuban Government on admitting that certain personal prejudices still existed on account of the historical and social cultural roots of the population. According to estimates in the World Directory of Minorities, the percentage of people of African descent in the Cuban population varied between 33.9 per cent and 69 per cent. However, according to the 1995 national internal migration survey, the breakdown of the population by skin colour was 66.7 per cent white, 20.1 per cent mixed-race and 13.2 per cent black (paragraph 29). How could the Cuban delegation explain such an enormous difference?

13. In paragraph 21 of the report there was a statement to the effect that Cuba had no ethnic minorities, but that there were representatives of other ethnic groups living in small communities or families, none of them separately amounting to 1 per cent of the total population. They included people from the Canary Islands, Catalans, Spaniards, Galicians, Basques, Haitians, Jamaicans and Japanese. What was the status of the members of those groups? Were they fully-fledged citizens, migrants or stateless persons? She also asked for socio-economic indicators concerning those groups, relating particularly to any existing programmes designed to protect their culture and languages.

14. The reform of the Constitution had added to the text a new chapter III concerning foreigners. Article 34 in that chapter stated that foreigners resident in Cuba were assimilated to Cubans in matters such as the protection of their persons and property, the enjoyment of the rights and performance of the duties laid down in the Constitution (subject to the conditions and limits laid down by the law) and the obligation to abide by the Constitution and the law (paragraph 5). She asked for clarification of the meaning of the term "assimilated". It was generally accepted that members of minority groups should not be forcibly assimilated into society. She asked the delegation to produce the text of article 34 to enable the Committee to verify whether it was in conformity with the General Recommendation XI.

15. Paragraph 9 of the report stated that one of the fundamental principles governing the social development policy which the Cuban State had been implementing since 1959 was the preferential treatment accorded without distinction to the most marginalized social groups, namely young people, women and blacks. Those measures met the requirements of articles 1.4 and 2.2 of the Conventions. She asked the delegation whether it could provide the Committee with more detailed information on the subject, and whether it had socio-economic indicators which would show the progress made by blacks.

16. Cuba's role in the struggle against racism and apartheid was highly commendable. However, she recalled that under article 3, States parties undertook to prevent, prohibit and eradicate all practices of segregation and discrimination in territories under their jurisdiction. In April 1996 the Council of Ministers in Cuba had adopted Decree No. 271 to check migration from the provinces to the capitals. That decree appeared to affect primarily the poorest individuals - namely blacks and mulattos, who came primarily from the eastern provinces. Similarly, during the same year, there were numerous reports of forced evictions of tenants, and in particular black squatters. She asked whether the individuals concerned had been forcibly returned to the

eastern provinces and whether the government had taken any resettlement measures on their behalf by providing them with accommodation and jobs.

17. It appeared that all acts of propaganda inspired by ideas or theories based on the superiority of a race, or of a group of persons of a particular colour or ethnic origin, were condemned and punished under Cuban legislation. She asked the delegation to state what the penalties provided for under article 295 of the Penal Code were, and whether there had been any cases in which they had been imposed.

18. Under article 127 of the Constitution, the Office of the Attorney-General, on learning of a violation of civic rights, took action to restore the breached rights and to bring those responsible for the breach to book (paragraph 69). She asked how many such cases had been brought before the courts and whether the delegation could give more information to the Committee concerning complaints and petitions for redress submitted to the civil rights department and on the action taken.

19. Article 27 of the Constitution prohibited the use of any form of violence or force to extract a confession and that any information obtained in breach of that prohibition was null and void, while those responsible were liable to punishment under the law. She asked whether the delegation could provide more information on the subject of the application of that provision with regard to blacks and mulattos. During the consideration of the previous report submitted by Cuba, the members of the Committee had observed that the proportion of blacks in the prison population was abnormally high. She asked what the present situation was, and how many blacks were in prison on account of crimes and offences committed under general legislation.

20. She reminded the delegation that in its General Recommendation XIII the Committee had called upon States parties to review and improve the training of law-enforcement officials so that the standards of the Convention, as well as the 1979 Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, were fully implemented. They were, moreover, required to provide information on the subject in their periodic reports.

21. Turning to the subject of political rights, she asked how many blacks had been nominated by the Communist Party as candidates in the 1993 elections. How many blacks there were in the higher echelons of the Communist Party? What was the situation of black women?

22. The Government of Cuba had slightly eased the restrictions on the freedom of movement of certain former political prisoners or dissidents. The restrictions on travel affecting the population as a whole had also been relaxed. However, Cuban nationals still had to request government permission to leave their country and return to it. The Committee would like to know whether the legislation on that subject had also been relaxed.

23. The fact that during the 1980s and 1990s the proportion of blacks among the "boat people" seeking to flee Cuba had grown considerably was indicative of their high level of economic vulnerability. The Committee requested

statistics on the subject and details concerning the immigration of Cubans authorized by the United States Government under the agreements concluded between the two countries on 9 September 1994.

24. Paragraph 6 stated that the Constitution guaranteed that no one could be deprived of his or her nationality. She asked whether persons who had left the country illegally also enjoyed that right.

25. Article 24 of the Constitution stipulated that the State recognized the right to inherit privately-owned housing and other items of personal property. In addition, article 293 of the Penal Code provided penalties for breaches of property rights. She asked for information on the subject and on the percentage of Afro-Cubans owning personal property.

26. The adoption of a number of legal reforms concerning freedom of religion was to be welcomed, and the ensuing spread of religious practice was to be noted. The Santeros, who practised the Afro-Cuban Santería religion, had also benefited from those reforms. She saw a contradiction in terms between the fact that certain members of the Communist Party were wearing necklaces and wrist bands proclaiming their membership of that religion and articles 291 and 294 of the Penal Code, under which crimes against freedom of thought were punishable (paragraph 85 of the report).

27. The Committee welcomed the progress made in Cuba with regard to the rights to health, medical care, social security and welfare services, particularly with regard to access to drinking water and sewage disposal. However, since the imposition of the embargo, and particularly since the adoption of the Helms-Burton Act, the situation had worsened considerably, and the health of the Cuban people was being seriously affected by shortages of food and medicines. The inclusion of foodstuffs and medicines in the trade embargo was an unacceptable violation of the right to an adequate standard of living.

28. She asked whether dismissals of teachers were continuing and whether Act No. 34/80 had been repealed.

29. The Committee would like further details on the practical effects in Cuba of "condemnation of racism of all kinds and the fostering of equality in the various aspects of socio-political and economic life" (paragraph 66 of the report).

30. The information given on article 7 of the Convention was very comprehensive. However, the authorities needed to take measures urgently to sensitize the law-enforcement bodies on human rights questions.

31. Finally, the Committee recommended that the State party should ratify the amendments to paragraph 6 of article 8 of the Convention; publicize the report under consideration and the conclusions of the Committee; make the Declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention; and ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

32. Mr. van BOVEN expressed appreciation of the quality of the report; but he drew attention to the lack of concrete examples of the implementation of the country's legislation in the campaign against racial discrimination.

33. He began by asking exactly what was meant by the term "ethnic groups" used in paragraph 21 of the report.

34. He also asked for detailed information on cases of practical application of article 295 of the Penal Code, which dealt with offences against the right to equality (paragraph 45 of the report; article 2 of the Convention).

35. In his view Act No. 54 of 27 December 1985 (the Associations Act) did not provide conclusive evidence that the provisions of paragraph (b) of article 4 of the Convention were fully complied with (paragraph 63 of report).

36. As regards article 5 of the Convention, the Committee asked what was meant by the term "socialist legality" (paragraphs 67 to 69 of the report). He asked in what cases the law provided that Cubans could be deprived of their nationality (paragraph 77 of the report). The Committee would also appreciate additional information on the rights to meet, to demonstrate and to associate guaranteed in articles 54 and 55 of the Constitution (paragraph 86 of the report).

37. Paragraph 130 of the report stated that the full enjoyment of basic human rights was daily featured in the Cuban press. In that connection, he asked whether the government intended to make the text of the Convention, the periodic report and the conclusions of the Committee public. He went on to draw the attention of the delegation to General Recommendation XIII, concerning the training of law-enforcement officials in the protection of human rights, and General Recommendation XVII, concerning the establishment of national bodies to facilitate implementation of the Convention.

38. Finally, he asked whether the Cuban authorities envisaged making the declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention.

39. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ thanked the delegation for submitting an extremely informative report, which evidenced the considerable progress made by Cuba in the elimination of racial discrimination. It was useful to recall that the policy of combating discrimination and promoting equality was enshrined in the Constitution (as it was in other legal instruments in Cuba) and that foreigners residing in Cuba were assimilated to Cubans (article 34 in chapter III of the Constitution). But the primary concern was that of knowing how those provisions were translated into realities. The report gave a number of examples of how that was done.

40. Cuba was a multi-ethnic country with large black and mixed-race population groups. Consequently, the policy currently being followed, which had hitherto given good results, and in particular the measures described in paragraphs 22-37, should be pursued further.

41. Regarding article 2, he asked whether the government had considered it necessary to take measures to give effect to its second paragraph and, if so, what was the nature of the measures taken and which population groups were benefiting therefrom.

42. Cuba was to be congratulated on its policy with regard to asylum and in implementation of article 3 of the Convention and on its effective campaign against apartheid (article 120 of the Penal Code).

43. The provisions of article 295 of the Penal Code and of the 1985 Associations Act seemed fully to meet the obligations created under article 4 of the Convention. However, the Committee desired more precise information on the consequences of the implementation of these provisions in Cuban society.

44. As regards the implementation of article 5 of the Convention, Mr. Valencia Rodriguez asked how the legal provisions described in the report had been implemented in the various fields of education, labour and health, and whether the different ethnic groups (white, black, mixed-race and Asians) enjoyed satisfactory access to the different services. The Committee would also be interested in receiving information on the representation of those groups within the machinery of State.

45. He asked whether the courts had handed down sentences in implementation of article 295 of the Penal Code or of the Associations Act. He also asked what penalties had been imposed and what remedies an individual had in order to uphold his rights (article 6 of the Convention).

46. The Committee was pleased to note that all persons had access to education at every level without distinction of race or national origin; that scholarships were awarded to both Cuban and foreign pupils; that an element of human rights education had been introduced into school curricula; and that the cultures of different ethnic groups were being promoted.

47. Finally, he asked how the authorities guaranteed the impartiality and objectivity of the information disseminated in the media, since in accordance with the Constitution those media were State-owned.

48. Mr. DIACONU began by referring to article 20 of the Cuban Civil Code, which stated that, if an international treaty to which Cuba was a party established rules different from those set out in the relevant articles of the Civil Code, the rules applied would be those in the treaty (document HRI/CORE/1/Add.34, para. 64). He asked why that rule was mentioned only in connection with the Civil Code, and whether the rules laid down in international treaties which differed from the provisions of the Penal Code or the Administrative Code would also take precedence. The international instruments ratified by Cuba formed an integral part of Cuban positive law and should consequently be respected and implemented, regardless of any differences from domestic legislation.

49. He asked for information on the nature of the "fair policy of ... promotion ... of blacks" referred to in paragraph 14 of the report. In that connection it was gratifying to note that Cuban penal law designated apartheid as a crime and provided for the imposition of heavy penalties on persons endeavouring to institute or maintain the dominance of one racial group over another in keeping with policies of racial extermination, segregation or discrimination (article 120 of the Penal Code, paragraph 52 of the report).

50. Referring to the implementation of article 4 of the Convention, Mr. Diaconu asked whether a clearer definition of the racist and segregationist associations in question was to be found in Act No. 54 concerning associations. He asked whether the prohibition applied only to their creation or, as required under article 4, to their activities as well. The Associations Act authorized the development of associations promoting the study, dissemination and conservation of the history, culture and art of groups of different nationalities. The Committee would like information on whether such associations existed and the nature of their activities.

51. In connection with the role of the Attorney-General and the possibility of instituting criminal proceedings in respect of acts of racial discrimination, Mr. Diaconu asked whether there existed in Cuba the concept of administrative litigation, under which enable any citizen considering that his fundamental rights had been prejudiced by the action of an official could apply to have that action rescinded and to receive compensation, independently of the position taken by the Attorney-General.

52. Finally, he considered it important to know whether the Cuban media treated the human rights situation in Cuba with the same critical attitude as they considered the social injustices and economic problems encountered in countries of the northern hemisphere.

53. Mr. de GOUTTES had noted a number of positive elements in the periodical report and the core document received from Cuba, and in particular the useful information concerning the composition of the population and racially mixed marriages, although, admittedly, a more recent census than that of 1981, on which the data supplied were based, would have been welcome. He also considered positive the information supplied in paragraph 60 and the paragraphs following on the provisions of the Penal Code, which met the requirements of article 4 of the Convention, and the information concerning the policy of social aid for the neediest groups. He hoped that the Cuban delegation would be able to submit to the Committee a report on the work of the Anthropology Centre, which was studying race relations and ethnicity in Cuba (paragraph 33).

54. He regretted the lack of concrete information in the report, and in particular the absence of social indicators which would have fleshed out some items of information contained in the report which, although interesting, were over-general; some of those items were more suitable for the core document than for the periodic report.

55. He had read in the report (paragraph 14) that a draft document designed to foster a fair policy of promotion of blacks and women was under discussion by workers, women, peasants, students and the general public, who were invited to make their own contributions to it. He was keenly interested in acquainting himself with the contents of that draft document if the latter was available. He hoped the Cuban Government would in its next report provide concrete information on complaints concerning racial discrimination lodged with the competent authorities.

56. As a matter of principle he felt embarrassed by the list of biochemical, immunological, physiological and genetic characteristics given in paragraph 24

which might have to be taken into account in the establishment of a classification by race for statistical purposes. Likewise, although he abhorred the crime of apartheid and racial segregation, he nevertheless considered that there was no justification for retaining the death penalty for persons who committed such crimes, as was stipulated in article 120 of the Penal Code. He wished to know more about the exact role of the Attorney-General in the repression of racial discrimination and wondered whether victims or associations could start proceedings. Finally, he asked what measures the Cuban Government intended to take to ensure the publication of its periodic reports and the observations, conclusions and recommendations on them made by the Committee.

57. Mr. GARVALOV congratulated the Cuban delegation on the excellent quality of its periodical report, a feature which distinguished it from the majority of the reports submitted to the Committee by States parties to the Convention. The report contained a wealth of information on the efforts being made by Cuba to eliminate racial discrimination and segregation and to eradicate racism from mentalities. It clearly demonstrated that racism was not a predominant feature of Cuban society; that was attested to, for example, by the number of interracial marriages.

58. He had observed an apparent contradiction between paragraphs 61 and 63 of the core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.64) concerning the procedure governing the incorporation of international instruments ratified by Cuba into national legislation. He asked the Cuban delegation to indicate whether there was in fact a single procedure for incorporation.

59. Turning to the periodic report (CERD/C/319/Add.4), he stated that even if, as stated in the report, Cuban society was homogenous and multicultural and that everyone enjoyed the same rights, the small communities or families from the Canary Islands and other places mentioned in paragraph 21 did constitute different ethnic entities, regardless of the fact that none of them separately amounted to 1 per cent of the total population. They should be considered as such for purposes of the Convention.

60. He asked what were the conditions and limits established by law relating to the enjoyment of all the rights and protections extended to foreigners resident in Cuba (paragraph 47). He also asked for explanations concerning the exact intention underlying the provisions of article 120 of the Penal Code (paragraph 52) laying down penalties, inter alia, for persons seeking to divide the population according to racial criteria. As ordinary persons were incapable of committing such acts, he wished to know precisely at whom those provisions were aimed. He asked the Cuban delegation to indicate whether any associations had been prohibited under the Associations Act (No. 54), which prohibited the creation of racist and segregationist associations. He also asked the delegation to state whether the Attorney-General had had knowledge of cases in which constitutional legality had been violated by State bodies (paragraph 67) and whether the National Assembly and the Council of State enjoyed equal powers.

61. He noted with satisfaction that the Cuban Government was making great efforts to have knowledge of human rights generally disseminated in the fields

of education and teaching. He asked whether the Government was also ensuring that the provisions of the Convention were taught at secondary school and university levels.

62. Mr. WOLFRUM shared the general opinion that the Cuban report was of a high standard. It presented particularly interesting information in a structured document prepared in conformity with the guidelines laid down by the Committee. However, he too regretted that the report did not contain more concrete information on the implementation of the legislation on racial discrimination and on the problems arising locally. He hoped that Cuba would remedy that omission in its next report.

63. He appreciated the attitude shown by the Cuban Government in recognizing, in paragraph 17 of the report, that racial prejudice still existed in private life. However, he pointed out to the delegation that article 1 of the Convention related only to racial discrimination in the field of public life.

64. He had noted with considerable interest that the partial results of scientific research into racial prejudice in Cuba had become available (paragraph 18). He wished to have more detailed information on that research. He asked what were the aspects covered and who was responsible for conducting the research. The full results would be very useful to the Committee, as would those obtained by the Anthropology Centre of the Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment on the subject of race relations and ethnicity in Cuba (paragraph 33).

65. He pointed out that the provisions of the Associations Act (No. 54), mentioned in paragraph 63, did not fully meet the requirements of article 6 (b) of the Convention, which called for the prohibition, not only of the creation of racist organizations, but also of racist acts and incitement to racial discrimination. In his view the provisions in question related rather to article 7 of the Convention, which dealt with measures to be taken to combat prejudices which led to racial discrimination. He wished to receive additional information on article 295 of the Penal Code, referred to in paragraph 64 of the report, and explanations of the meaning of the expression "socialist legality" appearing in paragraph 67.

66. Regarding the functions of the Attorney-General, he asked whether the latter was required to institute proceedings against persons committing violations of legality in all cases, or only when he considered it desirable to do so. He also requested explanations on whether the constitutional provisions mentioned in paragraph 81 related to the behaviour of citizens, not only as individuals, but also as representatives of the State.

67. Mr. RECHETOV thanked the large Cuban delegation for the constructive dialogue which it had begun with the Committee and on the high standard of the country's report.

68. It was clear from paragraph 14 that major steps were being taken to improve the lives of the Cuban people and in particular to ensure the occupational advancement of blacks - a measure which furthered the objectives of the Convention. Likewise, paragraphs 16 and 17 reflected a healthy

self-critical attitude on the part of the Cuban authorities, who recognized frankly that racial prejudices still existed, even if only in private life. Mr. Rechetov warned against such attitudes; even though they were not expressly addressed in the Convention, they often proved the vectors or origins of acts of racial discrimination.

69. In his turn he drew attention to paragraph 21 of the report, the second and third sentences in which seemed to him mutually contradictory. The one recognized the existence of an "ethnos" comprising 98 per cent of the population, while the other stated that there were no ethnic minorities. He asked whether the delegation could enlighten the Committee on that point.

70. As regards the implementation of article 4 of the Convention, he had taken note with interest of the detailed provisions, summarized in paragraph 82, which upheld the rights of all citizens without any discrimination whatsoever. He asked whether the authorities received many complaints concerning acts of discrimination, particularly acts committed in health institutions.

71. Mr. YUTZIS associated himself with all the questions put by the previous speakers and raised a point of order on methodology concerning the statistics supplied by States parties. He recalled that the last census in Cuba dated back to 1981 and pointed out that the statement to the effect that the living conditions of the black population were improving in parallel with their numerical importance could only be verified with the assistance of reliable and up-to-date statistics. In that context he asked for confirmation that the black population of Cuba was not the object of any kind of exclusion, particularly in economic matters.

72. He had taken note of the statement in paragraph 126 of the report that the Cuban population had been kept informed of the most important events in the struggle against racial discrimination, apartheid and Zionism. He failed to understand the purpose of that mixture of subjects.

73. Mr. Diaconu took the Chair.

74. Mr. BANTON drew attention to a point of terminology. He queried the translation, in the English version of the report from Cuba, of the word "mestizos" by the expression "mixed race". That usage derived from a notion that pure races existed - an idea which dated back to the 1850s and for which there was no longer any place in the discussion. What was more, anthropological texts published in English were currently using the term "mestizos". Equally, the use of the expressions "multiraciality" and "distinctive racial ties" was in his view unfortunate. He warned against any reference to pseudo-science which might be used for discriminatory purposes. Admittedly, it might sometimes be useful, for socio-economic purposes or in the context of national health policy, to classify people on the basis of skin colour (for example, certain groups were more likely to catch certain diseases than others); but that factor alone did not make a "race" - a term which should be used with caution.

75. Lastly, referring to the concept of "racist" society (paragraph 17), he considered the use of that term an overhasty generalization and a dangerous short cut. It was difficult to say at what point a society began to be racist or ceased to be so.

76. Mr. SHERIFIS had noted the statement in the last sentence of paragraph 21 of the report to the effect that the minority communities living in Cuba had "similar" rights to those of the main ethnic group (Cubans). He would have preferred to see the word "identical" and asked if the choice of word had a concrete significance. Turning to the subject of the racial composition of the population of Cuba (paragraph 27), he asked for more precise information on the participation of the different groups in the decision-making process and, more generally, in the different professions. He had noted (paragraph 13) that blacks, women and young people were being encouraged to enter managerial positions in pursuance of a targeted policy and asked whether the action taken took the form of systematic programmes of positive discrimination and whether those programmes had had perceptible effects on the majority group.

77. In the context of the campaign against racial discrimination he considered it important to achieve wide dissemination of knowledge of the Convention and also of the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee. He asked whether the State party was taking action to that end.

78. In conclusion, he noted with pleasure that Cuba had ratified the amendment to paragraph 6 of article 8 of the Convention. He took the opportunity of inviting the Government to contemplate making the declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention.

79. Ms. FLÓREZ PRIDA (Cuba) thanked the Committee for the interest it had shown in the report submitted by Cuba and would be glad to try to reply to the numerous questions asked. She wished immediately to explain to the Committee that the fact that no census had taken place since 1981 was due solely to the economic difficulties which her country had been experiencing for a number of years. However, she was already in a position to inform the Committee that new and updated statistics were in course of preparation and that, following the recent elections to the General Assembly (candidatures in which were put forward, not by the Communist Party, but by groups of districts) 28.2 per cent of the deputies were of black and mixed-race origin - a percentage which corresponded roughly to their number expressed as a proportion of the total population.

80. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would resume consideration of the tenth to thirteenth periodic reports of Cuba at its next meeting.

81. The Cuban delegation withdrew.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.